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NOTES AND NEWS.

THE GROWTH OF A MYTH.—One of the most persistent of the early myths in regard to the American Indians was that of the existence of a tribe of Welsh Indians, the descendants of a colony founded by Prince Madoc about the year 1170. The story is told with a number of romantic details by different writers of the last century, some of whom put the number of the tribe as high as thirty thousand, all speaking Welsh, with Welsh Bibles—although printing was not invented until several centuries after the supposed date of Madoc's voyage—beads, and crucifixes. The different versions bear the earmarks of a common original source, which is probably a work called the Turkish Spy, published some time prior to 1738, when it was quoted by Malcolme in an essay on the Keltic languages. The mythic tribe was first located on the Atlantic coast and was identified with the Tuscaroras, of whom it was asserted that "their language is the same as is spoken by the British or Welsh;" that they were descended from the colony of Madoc, and that "they show his tomb to this day" (*ante* 1738). As the country began to be settled the mythic tribe receded, and about 1776 we find them on the Missouri, somewhere above St. Louis, still speaking Welsh. They were apparently of the Tory stripe, for a few years later, at the close of the Revolution, we find that they had removed seven hundred miles up the Red river. By this time their printed Bibles had changed to parchment rolls, written with blue ink. From the location it is probable that these were the same Indians whom Custer heard conversing in Irish. Later on they are the Mokis, and lastly the Modocs, taking their name from the princely founder of the tribe. Having now crossed the continent, their mission appears to be ended, and as we hear no more of them we may surmise that the miners finally drove them into the Pacific.

The foregoing myths appear to have originated in the following versions, which will serve admirably to illustrate how such myths grow. The earlier account is simple and entirely possible; the other, about thirty years later, is amplified and utterly impossible, and yet is evidently derived from the first. In the Turkish Spy, probably about 1730, it is stated that "a certain Inhabitant of

Virginia, * * * straggling not long ago into the Wilderness, by Chance fell amongst a People, who, according to some Law or Custom of theirs, condemned him to Death ; when he, in the Hearing of them, made his Prayer to God in the British (*i. e.*, Welsh) Tongue, upon which he was released."

This may be all true enough, but the Rev. Mr. Beatty, preaching to the rough frontiersmen of that day, saw here a chance to point a moral as well as to adorn a tale, and gives the story thus in 1768 : "I have been informed that many years ago a clergyman went from Britain to Virginia, and having lived some time there went from thence to South Carolina ; but after some time, for some reason he resolved to return to Virginia, and accordingly set out by land accompanied with some other persons. In travelling through the back parts of the country, which was then very thinly inhabited, he fell in with a party of Indian warriors going to attack the inhabitants of Virginia. Upon examining the clergyman, and finding he was going to Virginia, they looked upon him and his companions as belonging to that province, and took them all prisoners, and told them they must die. The clergyman, in preparation for another world, went to prayer, and being a Welshman, prayed in the Welsh language. One or more of the Indians was much surprised to hear him pray in their own language. Upon this they spoke to him, and finding he could understand them, got the sentence of death reversed, and his life was saved. They took him with them into their country, where he found a tribe whose native language was Welsh, though the dialect was a little different from his own, which he soon came to understand. They showed him a book, which he found to be the Bible, but which they could not read ; and on his reading and explaining it, their regard for him was much heightened."

It is worthy of note that there has recently sprung up in the same region of North Carolina a similar myth, by which some five thousand mongrels, calling themselves Croatan Indians, seek to prove their descent from the lost colony of Roanoke. The one myth may have suggested the other.

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